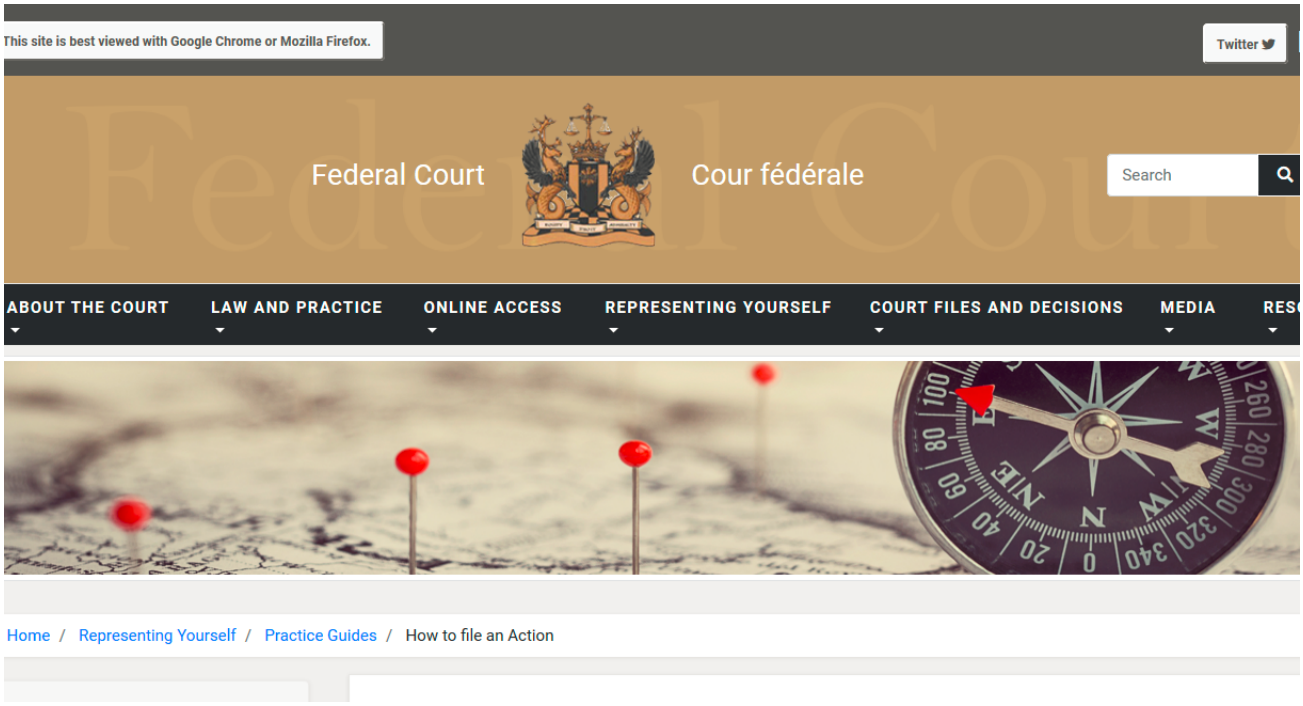
CANUCK LAW

Reporting That You're Not Getting Elsewhere (Do Your Own Research To Verify)

JANUARY 25, 2026 BY RONNIE

Getting Started With Finding Court Files



A topic that frequently comes up is fundraising for public interest litigation. Individuals and groups solicit money for a variety of causes, and they ask others to donate. In principle, there's nothing wrong with doing that.

But instead of being told which cases are potentially worthwhile, let's look at ways people can determine for themselves if something has merit. These principles apply regardless of the issue being litigated, whether it's vaccine passports, climate, free speech, gender nonsense, victim compensation, etc… But for simplicity, it will only address *civil* matters.

When asking others for money, many will describe their case in glowing terms. They'll pitch the cause, as well as the progress that's being made.

Look at this from a consumer protection point of view. If you are being asked to contribute to a cause, how do you know that your money will be wisely spent? Simple, you do your own research.

I'm Busy, How Long Will This Take?

That depends on how much effort one is willing to put into this. Phoning a Court or sending an email can take a few minutes. Reading some of the papers (depending on what's there) can be a few hours, or more. Like with any potential investment, the proposal needs to be examined carefully.

It's true that decisions already released can be found within seconds. But that is of no help to an ongoing case, unless any procedural rulings are posted, which is rare.

However, if someone has enough money that this does not matter, then donate away!

First, Get Whatever Documents Are Published Or Available

Before doing any court searches, see what's already in the open. This likely means contacting whoever is seeking money, and they should provide something.

Usually, a Statement of Claim or similar document will be readily available. This makes further searching easier, if necessary. You will have the file number at this point.

Unless Restricted By Order Or Some Law, Files Are Public

Rather than simply take someone's word on what's happening within a case, look for yourself. Court documents are surprisingly easy to get ahold of.

The ***Federal Court*** offers the best system for accessing files. With just a party name or file

number, anyone can look up the entire progress of the case. Specific documents can are usually provided with a simple email request. Note: to cut down on the size of the request, focusing on pleadings or motion records is usually best.

The ***Alberta Court of King's Bench*** is likely the worst. It costs $25 (up from $10) to pull all of the documents, if you have the case information. If not, you may have to issue a general search first, going in blind, and pay another $25.

The ***Manitoba Court of King's Bench*** allows file history to be instantly searched, much like with Federal Court. However, there is a charge of 50 cents per page to have them sent.

The ***British Columbia Supreme Court*** has instant, but paywalled access, unless you live in the Province, and use a Law Library. It costs $6 to access a file, and another $6 to download documents, although many are not available online.

The ***Ontario Superior Court*** recently modified its online system. Civil cases in Toronto generally list major filings and updates, while other regions show only basic information and upcoming appearances. Courts will *often* send documents that were filed electronically for free, but charge for paper copies.

While the methods (and costs) vary by Province, the point is that these filings are available to the public, expect in rare circumstances. Pulling these records may seem excessive. But if someone is asking for money to help finance a case, isn't this just researching an investment?

Of course, a quick update can be obtained by calling the Court directly, if anyone answers. The clerks typically provide general information upon request.

Now, if this is too much effort to bother with, the question must be asked: does it really matter what's going on with this case?

Assess For Yourself If This Case Is Worth Your Money

Now that the necessary documents are available, read them, or at least some. Then decide.

******People will probably interject at this point, saying they are not lawyers. For this, they don't have to be.***

A Statement of Claim is supposed to have 3 main parts:
(a) Facts alleged – the who, what, where, when that supposedly happened
(b) Relief sought – what remedies are being sought
(c) Laws relied on – what is the legal basis for the suit

A Statement of Claim should be well written, organized, and clearly explain the events that happened. The sections of relief and laws are typically very short.

Warning signs include: extremely long pleadings, lots of irrelevant details added, necessary information missing, caselaw being argued, opinions being inserted, or a generally convoluted structure. Keep in mind, the Judge hearing the case knows nothing at the start.

Preliminary challenges are common, especially when the Government is the Defendant. They would prefer to get the case thrown out immediate on a Motion to Strike. If one is filed, read the arguments. It may be baseless, but at least their objections should be clear.

These challenges often raise issues such as: jurisdiction, time limits (normally 2 years), or missing information. Again, read what they're filing.

What has happened since? While it's true that not everything gets filed, there should be some progression as time passes. If nothing is obvious, contact the Court, or ask the people who want your money.

******For busy people, focus on a few key documents: Statement of Claim; Statement of Defence; and any written submissions for Motions. The main ideas should be clear from those.***

Yes, this takes time, but consider the donation as an investment. Due diligence is usually helpful before making a decision.

This Is How Court Cases Are Evaluated On Canuck Law

Court documents are routinely pulled, and scrutinized for their content. If a case looks well organized, strong, and is making progress, then it's worth keeping an eye on. Although nothing is guaranteed, there's a better chance of getting to trial.

And if there are serious problems, then the public should know about them. If there seems to be an absurdly large amount of paperwork being filed, why is that happening? And when there's no apparent activity for years, what is the hold up?

Although this is done for reporting, the same techniques apply for prospective donors.

The more people look into litigation and legislative matters, the better. Other postings here have included: (a) general tips; (b) ATIP, or access to information; (c) CanLII searches; (d) lobbying registries; and (e) charity lookups.

People can ask for recommendations on which cases are worthwhile to invest in. And they may very well get good advice. But they may not.

***SOLUTIONS*, CANADA, CANADIAN DECISIONS**

One Reply to "Getting Started With Finding Court Files"

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JANUARY 25, 2026 AT 8:53 AM

Your site is a valuable public service…in ordinary, non-legal language you do help people understand that they must know what is going on in their province and even other provinces and how they can access the info.

Our people perish for lack of knowledge and ability to discern facts from fiction.